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ABSTRACT

THIS BOOKLET WAS WRITTEN TO HELP PARENTS UNDERSTAND THEIR TEENAGERS. CHAPTER ONE DISCUSSES CHANGES IN TEENAGERS, BOTH PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL. THE IMPORTANCE OF PEER GROUPS IS DISCUSSED. THE CHANGES IN THE WORLD SINCE THE PARENTS WERE TEENAGERS, ARE DISCUSSED IN CHAPTER TWO INCLUDING: (1) THE SCHOOL AND (2) THE EMPHASIS ON PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE. THE NEXT CHAPTER IS CONCERNED WITH SCHOOL, CHANGES IN IT, AND HELP PROVIDED INCLUDING GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING SERVICES. SUGGESTIONS ARE PROVIDED TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION WITH TEENAGERS. CHAPTER FOUR CONCENTRATES ON THE TEENAGER AT HOME AND THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION. SPECIFIC SUBJECTS COVERED ARE HOMEWORK, DATING, CARS, AND MONEY. THE SPECIAL ONES, UNDERACHIEVERS, THE GIFTED, GIRLS, THE POTENTIAL DROPOUT DESIRES, THOSE WANTING TO GET MARRIED, AND THE HANDICAPPED ARE COVERED IN THE NEXT CHAPTER. CHAPTER SIX CONCLUDES THE PAMPHLET WITH A DISCUSSION OF RULES. SPECIFIC RULES ARE INCLUDED COVERING AMONG OTHER AREAS PARTIES, CURFEWS, AND CAR USE. (KJ)

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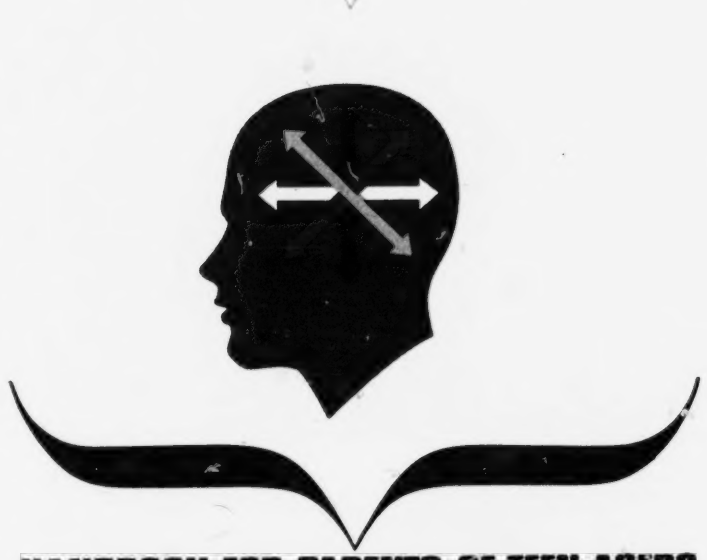

HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS OF TEEN-AGERS

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A CHANGING TIME

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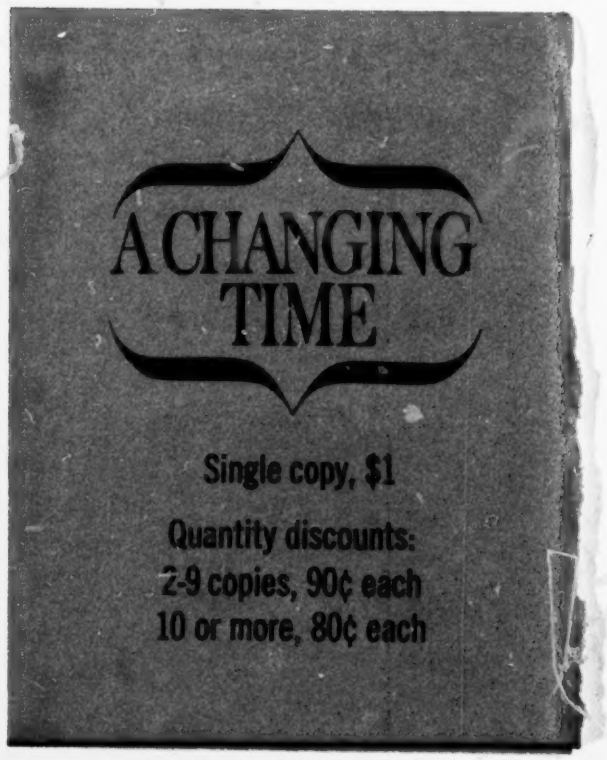

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CHAPTER ONE

A CHANGING TIME

"WHAT'S HE UP TO NOW?"

He preens before a mirror for hours, then leaves his room in a shambles, saying, "Don't touch anything!"

She says she adores older men, but she worries because boys in her class don't pay more attention to her.

He asks you a serious question, but before you've had time to answer, he decides you don't know enough to answer it.

She calls you a tyrant for restricting her hours on weeknights, but turns around and brags to her friends about her parents' standards.

He ignores your praise for an "A" in chemistry, then frets terribly the next quarter when it drops to a "B."

She indignantly insists that she wants to have a movie career, but she also wants you to teach her how to cook and sew.

Who are these enigmas?

They are your teen-agers, half still yours and half belonging to new (for them) other worlds and other people. Their actions at any moment can be frustrating, pleasing, alarming, surprising. You wish time and again that you could understand what's going on inside their heads.

Many professional persons, as well as parents, wonder what makes teen-agers--particularly those who have reached high school age—be as they are and act as they do. Sociologists, psychologists, educators, and even doctors (many of whom now specialize in teen-age problems), in recent years have

recognized the teen years as special years, requiring more research and, most of all, a great deal of understanding.

A parent who looks for help from the myriad of written material on teen-agers might become somewhat confused. The teen-ager lives in his own adolescent society, yet he copies the adult one; he is our major delinquency problem and at the same time our hope for the future; he wants to be independent, yet he clings to his childhood props. The teen years have been tabbed variously as "the second infancy," the "not-quite age" (not quite child, not quite adult), and "the shrouded inheritance of childhood."

The one fact that runs through all studies of teen-age years, however, can be summed up in one word: change. Your teen-ager is changing physically, mentally, and emotionally. He is moving away from childhood and reaching for adulthood. He is in limbo, so to speak, but he also is moving constantly in new directions.

To guide this restless change in teen-agers, parents need to change, too. Until the teen years, the parent is most likely to hover over children with the incessant question in mind, "What is he up to?" Now that you have a teen-ager to care for, the more understanding and helpful question to ask is, "What is he up against?"

Physical Changes

The description of adolescence as "second infancy" is an apt explanation of the physical growth that is taking place in your teen-ager. Remember how rapidly he grew in weight and height as a baby? Studies of physical growth now show that there is a relatively dormant stage of growth during young childhood, and then the young person's body begins to shoot upward and outward again, almost as rapidly as it did in infancy.

If all growth occurred evenly, though quickly, teen-agers wouldn't be as self-consciously awkward as they are. But growth isn't that easy for them, nor is it easy for parents, who wish there were such things as tripless rugs and invisible shoulder braces.

If you have a teen-age daughter, probably you are watching her experience a growth problem which turns her to tears and

overwhelms any assurances from you that things will be all right. Generally, girls are two years ahead of boys in putting on the adolescent spurt. They are taller and less awkward than boys of their own age, and all of this happens at a time when the changes inside of them, their sexual maturing, makes it important to them to receive attention from the opposite sex. (No wonder they think older men are exciting, and boys their own age silly.)

Studies also have shown that the growth rate in teen-agers is highly individual. Physical maturity may begin as early as in the 10th year, or may not even start until the 17th or 18th. It may stop and start like a balky Model-T. Some teen-agers shoot up first, others grow out first. This wide range of what can be considered normal physical growth is frustrating. Young people always are comparing themselves with others (a sign of maturity itself, because it shows that they are aware of other people and other standards), and it is unsettling for "Shorty" to watch his best friend grow into the nickname "Beanpole," while he himself keeps his old tag.

While all of these changes are obvious, the most important physical change in teen-agers—their sexual maturing—may be the cause of many of their emotional impulses, so puzzling to parents. A realization of sexual potential in teen-agers may cause them to be anxious, overly boisterous, suddenly modest, terribly self-conscious.

Undoubtedly, "sex education" has been a part of the training given in your home, from the early explanation of the family love that created "baby." This gradually developed into explanations of the "facts of life." (If you feel that your teen-ager still needs help on the "facts," there are many sources you can offer—written material, the family doctor, etc.) But beyond basic knowledge, what a teen-ager needs to know at this point is that his sexual maturing is a universal happening, neither wrong nor different; and that it is part of the whole adult person, to be handled with respect and responsibility.

Teen-agers need positive, strong guidance from their parents through these growth stages. Comparing your teen-ager unfavorably with another, and fretting over normal growth processes just because they make him different, will make him feel insecure and embarrassed about his physical appearance.

Stress the advantages of physical growth; compare your youngsters with individuals whom you know they would like to copy; help them to realize other attributes in people besides the physical ones; sweep those fragments of the broken vase away without a word; and forget how silly your daughter acted in front of your best friend's college freshman son.

Emotional Changes

Parents, not prepared for it, sometimes are dismayed to have children suddenly find many centers for living—not just the home, and to have many sources of information—not just the parents. Some parents call it rebellion; others wisely know that the teen-ager is kicking off the traces of strings that bind him to childhood. Most parents encourage their children to stretch out to new experiences through youth groups, churches, recreation.

One educator, a specialist in the early adolescent years, has said: "For parents, their child's adolescence should be a time for gradual retirement from the center of his universe, and if the retirement isn't voluntary, a healthy adolescent will assist it with a series of not too tactful nudges or shoves."

Teen-agers have been called self-centered, but they certainly shouldn't be blamed for it. The teen-age years are ones in which youngsters develop self-identification. They are learning about themselves, their relationships with others, and their responsibilities as individuals in an adult society. No parent can expect that this search for self can take place within the same boundaries as childhood or under the same watchful restrictions.

What are some of the handles that your teen-ager wants to grasp on this road to adulthood?

1. To be able to cope with his physical growth and to understand the physical maturity that is taking place.
2. To be accepted by friends and to be attractive to those of the opposite sex.
3. To keep the love and respect of parents, but also to have the freedom to make his own decisions and to be a responsible person.

4. To learn gradually about economic independence, and to plan for it.
5. To establish values that are his own and to succeed with them.

Because these goals are new, and the changes are frustrating, your teen-ager fluctuates between child and adult. He may be moody and sullen at one moment, then cheerfully different the next; he may seek your advice, then discard it; his bubbling self-confidence may be deflated to nothing because of what you consider to be nothing. He is very impatient with growing up.

The most helpful parent is the one who understands this impatience, who rides with it, restrains it when necessary, and who, through love, shows the teen-ager that he approves of his growing up.

The teen-ager should be, as a doctor working with this age group has written: "Somebody—somebody good—somebody with happy and unhappy feelings; sometimes quiet, sometimes excited; one minute content, the next, disturbed and disturbing. Somebody who by living adds to the excitement and wonder of the world."

The Togetherness of Teen-Agers

Anxious parents call it a "gang." Confident parents see it as a "group of friends." Psychologists refer to it as the "peer" group.

Whatever name you use, the social relationships of an adolescent are, at least in the early teens, more important to him than anything else. A great part of a teen-ager's discovery of who he is may be wrapped up in the question, "What do others think of me?"

Teen-agers, wanting to show independence but still needing the approval and praise that they received as children, turn for advice to those their own age, to heroes and heroines outside of the home (a teacher, an older teen-ager, a public idol), to just about anyone except their parents and other family members.

Their code of behavior as a group sometimes sets outrageous standards for what is sensible, in the minds of most parents. But if wearing patterns with checks, hair flying, and green on

Wednesday are part of the group's rules of order, then your teen-ager wants to follow, in order to belong.

There are times, too, when your teen-ager will think such behavior is silly and will want to be a nonconformist. If parents will allow him an outlet, will respect his ability to hold different values, even about small things, then his chances for social growth will be even better.

Parents, social psychologists, and educators view the great organization of teen-agers as something rather new, something which they didn't experience at that age. In this country, the so-called "adolescent society" or "teen-age culture" is completely different from what it was years ago. Some of the reasons:

- ►American society has tended to cluster teen-agers together at an earlier age and with fewer adult outlets than before. When this country was predominantly rural, and even later, when family entertainment was still on a "together" basis, teen-agers had much more contact with adults and less need for contact with one another.
- ►As high schools have become larger and more heterogeneous, teen-agers have grouped themselves by class more than ever before. Standards of dress, behavior, car ownership, and tastes in music and entertainment follow along class lines. Cars may represent status with some groups, record collections with others.
- ►American parents, generally doing what they thought was right, have not provided enough guidance for their teen-agers' groups, hoping that the groups would arrive, somehow automatically, at the "right" values and behavior. Although adult influence on an adolescent group requires the skill of a diplomat, it is a subtle necessity.

CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

Have you . . .

- ►Arranged for your teen-ager to have regular physical checkups so that he, you, and the family doctor are assured that he is maturing normally?

► Found other sources for information and advice on physical maturing, i.e. the family doctor, if your youngster seems reluctant to ask you?

► Checked the teen-age fashions and fads so that you are "up" on the styles and modes of appearance and can help your teen-ager choose a wardrobe that is both sensible and "like everyone else's"?

► Encouraged your teen-ager to develop a variety of interests (hobbies, sports, special study projects, etc.), so that he has both a productive pastime and an interest that he can share and enjoy with other people?

► Joined or helped to form a parent study group on teen-age problems in your school or neighborhood so that parents can not only pool their experiences with teen-agers but also cooperate on guiding teen-age behavior?

CHAPTER TWO

A CHANGING WORLD

"WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE . . ."

Hardly any parent survives his children's adolescence without describing or recalling many things about his own childhood and how things were "when I was growing up." Looking back helps both parent and adolescent on the "inside problems" —those unchanging changes that take place in the body and in the social development of a teen-ager.

But parents who recall the "outside" influences, those of formal education, preparation for the future, and family life, are passing on to their children more history than relevance. No one needs to be reminded that the 1960's are far different from the 1950's or an earlier decade, and this applies as much to the world of the adolescent as to that of adults.

What are some of the most significant changes? First of all, our society is taking time these days to regard the teen-ager as an important person. Educators, sociologists, psychologists, and public officials are cooperating to build up great resources of knowledge and activity on the problems of adolescents. Parents can find innumerable sources for help on raising teen-agers—special school personnel such as guidance counselors, correspondence and TV courses on adolescent behavior, adult education courses, countless books and articles based on new research regarding adolescence, and parent discussion groups.

Your community may be working with the specific problems of teen-agers who want to drop out of school. Or its particular concern may be for the very capable and creative young person. Whatever is your problem, or your community's problem, there are resources to help you and your teen-ager through

the long years of decision-making—decisions about himself and about his future.

Perhaps one reason for this great interest in the adolescent period of life is the fact that teen-agers remain in the adolescent world for a longer time than ever before, there are more of them, and they are more affluent than ever before.

During the 1930's and the full manpower years of the 1940's, teen-agers slipped quickly into adulthood, either because they were forced to seek employment or because opportunities were available. Also, until a decade ago, children of rural families could expect to be absorbed into the community life around them, and they started the transition early.

From this rather clearcut picture, the environment for adolescent growth in this country has changed considerably. Because job opportunities are fewer and job requirements are higher, schools have increased their holding power on students, and now almost two thirds of the country's teen-agers complete their high school education each year (compared to a little more than one third in 1935).

At the beginning of the 1960's, almost 80 percent of the nation's teen-agers lived in cities or in the suburbs. Unlike the rural teen-ager of bygone days or the teen-ager whose entertainment and associations were almost always tied to the family, the urban teen-ager lives in a somewhat frustrating world, where his social and intellectual development are looked upon as "problems" by the community. Radio, TV, newspapers, news magazines, and much of the emphasis in classroom discussions present him with adult dilemmas in social and political life; yet he must wait several years before becoming a decision-making adult himself.

Parents also may find that they have a teen-ager on their hands much earlier than they expected or remembered from their own adolescence. Problems of dating, going steady, and adult-type parties sometimes appear as early as the ages of 10 or 11. Young people become conscious of clothes and grooming—of the kind intended to attract the opposite sex—way ahead of their parents' pocketbooks. There is some consolation, however, in the trend for teen-age characteristics to end at the beginning of college-age years; life becomes much more serious then.

Another marked contrast to adolescence, as parents knew it, is the affluence of teen-agers, a phenomenon of this country and of this age. Situations differ with economics, geography, and race, and every community has its extremes of poverty and affluence, but the majority of the nation's adolescents benefit materially from our country's general wealth and progress.

Within a few years, the teen-age market for clothes, cars, music, and other "requirements" of adolescence will amount to $20 billion a year. Either through the affluence of their parents, the increased standard of living, or their own earnings from part-time or marginal work (usually spent without the worries of meals, rent, or insurance premiums), teen-agers are catered to as great consumers, particularly by the clothing, publishing, recording, and automobile industries.

The automobile as an adjunct of adolescence—and its effect—provide us with an excellent example of the changes that have occurred since today's parents were teen-agers. Car ownership or use is almost a standard expectation of the teen-ager; your son quite likely would be abashed to ask his date to ride in a cab or to be driven to a school dance by parents—his or hers. Driving takes up a considerable amount of time from a teen-ager's already busy day, and it gives the teen-ager a mobility to go far, fast. If an allowance won't support car ownership, sometimes a part-time job will, another time-consuming activity. Studies show that car ownership or use may mean social success at age 16 but scholastic failure at age 21, because the more a teen-ager uses a car, the poorer his school record. If he gets too far behind in school work or finds that a car, and the social mobility that goes with it, are too expensive to maintain on a part-time job, he may drop out of school.

Inside the School

Education has been moving right along with the tide of social and technological progress that is taking place. Today's parents know that the one-room schoolhouse is almost gone, that schools now use the latest in construction techniques, laboratory equipment, and flexible teaching facilities. They also know that high school education will provide their chil-

dren with the basic education they received, from the unchanging qualities of Shakespeare to the updated qualities of matter in physics classes.

But there are many changes within education affecting a teen-ager's high school experiences which may go unnoticed by parents.

Most probably, the high school attended by your teen-ager, whether junior or senior level, is bigger and better than the one you remember. For reasons of both financial efficiency and better services to students, high schools have been enlarged or consolidated. Every state in the country now has definite programs or plans to require all school districts to maintain a full 12 years of schooling within the district, a factor which will make schools bigger, from the first grade on. In this process, perhaps some of the closeness and individuality that families associate with a small high school are diminished, but replacing them are the opportunities for a full educational program taught in well-equipped surroundings.

As schools become larger and include a more heterogeneous group of students than in the past, the high school instructional program enlarges. Except in a few large cities where some high schools are for special students (vocational, science, or special college preparatory), the outstanding thing about the American high school is its comprehensiveness. One high school contains enough basic and elective offerings for all of its students, no matter what future they choose.

If your teen-ager's daily load of textbooks might fill a library cart, don't feel that he is the object of an over-zealous teacher. It means that your school and its teachers are responding to the educational needs of today's world. With so much to learn, so many new developments, and such high standards of quality needed in every field, the country's schools are demanding more of its students, to prepare them for a society that will demand more of them.

Contributing to the improvement of education are better teachers. As communities increase the financial and social status of their teachers, so the teachers are able to improve themselves. Your teen-ager's teachers have better training, more experience, and more continuing programs for professional improvement than teachers of just a few years ago.

Do you remember the special plans and trouble required of your high school teachers in order to present an occasional filmstrip or arrange a special field trip? Many teaching tools now accepted as ordinary in classrooms today were either unheard of or were "infants" when today's parents were attending high school. And new techniques are being added almost daily.

Television in classrooms provides students with vast resources and educational experiences. The fact that high school students come to classrooms with a lifetime of living with TV has increased the vocabulary, interests, and often the values of today's teen-agers, as contrasted with pre-TV generations. Team teaching, automated teaching devices, seminar programs, completely renovated curricula in the sciences and math—these are just some of the teaching methods accepted as ordinary by teen-agers. They are probably new to their parents, however.

To the Future

The big question that every teen-ager feels must be answered before adolescence is finished is, "What is my future?" From a gradual redirection of their interests beyond themselves and their families, adolescents build up relationships with friends, with values they can call their own, and finally with plans for a future that is their own.

This last goal is a primary one for formal education, and changes in it probably have done more to change school programs than any other factor.

A high school diploma today provides about as much background for work as did one from an elementary school 25 years ago. In our highly technical and automated economy, there is a decreasing demand for unskilled or improperly trained labor. There is a constant demand for well-educated, flexibly-trained workers, whether at the professional, technical, or semi-skilled level.

Those students who drop out of high school before receiving a diploma probably will face unemployment either immediately or in the future. Those who drift in their high school program, not taking advantage of the specialization in vocational or academic subjects, will be poorly equipped for a satisfying

future upon graduation. Those who want to attend college and who don't plan ahead may not be able to pay for a college education and may not find room at the college of their choice. They may not even have the necessary academic requirements for college entrance.

For these reasons, planning for the future comes early and looms large in your teen-ager's high school life. By the ninth grade, high school guidance programs should be directing him—and you, his parents—toward definite plans and a definite scholastic program for the remainder of his high school years.

In this process, schools are just as eager to see girls plan their futures as boys, even though girls tend to count their future in terms of a husband and children. If the present trend toward early marriage for girls continues, most women will be only in their mid-thirties by the time their youngest child enters school. This gives them many years in which to be part of the labor market or to enrich their education which may have been interrupted by marriage. Helping girls to plan far ahead for families, future job training, or further education should be part of their planning in high school.

A generation or two ago, high schools provided the terminal point for formal education for the majority of graduates. Today, however, high schools want to prepare teen-agers for continuing education, even if they are not college-bound. Actually, predictions are that by 1975, two thirds of all high school graduates will enroll in colleges, many only for adult enrichment purposes. Only about 20 percent will earn college degrees.

Today's complex world—in which cultures intermix, knowledge expands rapidly in every field, and even semi-skilled labor must continue to learn in order to keep up—demands that today's adolescents prepare for a lifetime of learning.

CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

Have you . . .

- ►Become well informed about the total school program, what it offers your teen-ager and his talents?
- ►Shown an interest in the particular educational problems of your community, whether they be too many dropouts or

different cultural backgrounds, so that you can work to improve these problems and thereby improve the whole school program?

- ►Made sure that teacher salaries and working conditions in your community are competitive with other professions, so that your schools can attain and keep an outstanding faculty?
- ►Visited the high school, by appointment or on special days set aside for parents, to learn about new teaching techniques, new curriculum offerings, etc.?
- ►Encouraged the vocational interests of your teen-ager and helped him to find out more about the requirements and future prospects for fields in which he is interested; cooperated with the schools on planning for his future?
- ►Helped your teen-ager to know more about the realities of the "world of work," so that his planning is based on accurate information rather than on superficial impressions?
- ►Stimulated an interest in education as a continuing part of your teen-ager's life, by providing him with current reading materials, challenging him to be interested in the society about him, and setting an example of interest yourself?

CHAPTER THREE

ON CAMPUS

"WHAT ARE THE SCHOOLS DOING . . . ?"

A teen-ager is educated in many places—the home, community organizations, through mass media, social institutions, youth groups—but most important of all, at school.

Formal education in this country has gone through great changes, spurred by current demands. Fifty years ago secondary education was for the very few, mostly boys, almost all priming for college. Today, with compulsory attendance laws, child labor laws, and an increasingly technical society, high schools enroll 90 percent of the high-school age population and try to prepare them for all levels of personal and vocational competency.

The changeover from elementary school to high school for your teen-ager may have been gradual or it may have been a rather sharp switch, depending upon the kind of school organization used in your community. In the traditional pattern, the 8-4 system (eight elementary grades followed by four secondary grades), a teen-ager doesn't enter high school until the ninth grade, although most communities using this system plan some transition and contact with the high school during the seventh and eighth grades of elementary school. More and more school systems are beginning to use an intermediate school of either two or three years, believing that the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades represent special problems in personal and educational development.

But whether the jump occurs at the seventh or ninth grades, it is still a big change:

► The high school student body, drawing its enrollment from several schools, seems like a mass of strangers to the freshman teen-ager. Friends who sat in the same classroom with him for six or more years are now scattered throughout the schedule, and he may not be with them in more than one or two classes, if any.

► Instead of just one teacher, helped occasionally by specialists, the high school freshman is faced with a long line of new and different teachers, each well versed in his subject and requiring detailed work assignments in his field. In a large lecture class, the teen-ager may feel that he is an unknown quantity in a rollbook.

► To provide your teen-ager with the most challenge and preparation, your high school may use or be considering individually prescribed instruction, which permits each student to achieve in each subject at his own rate. Already there are several ungraded high schools in the country.

► A major goal of high school education is to foster independent and creative thinking in students. To do this, the high school in your community may organize its schedule so that its students have time, and perhaps their own place, for independent study. This is not at all like the study hour in the library that your teen-ager knew in the lower grades; it is more like the demands he might meet at a college. Assignments perhaps will take him outside of the school, to the municipal court building, a museum, or the county library.

Help at School

High schools know that moving from an elementary school plan to the secondary school is difficult for most teen-agers. To make it easier, the high school provides:

► *A homeroom teacher.* This home base, from which a student moves on to other classes and activities each day, gives the student a teacher to whom he can direct questions about the school and its activities and a teacher who learns about the student's social and civic potentialities. It also gives students a group to belong to, and much of the student organization within a high school comes from the homeroom.

► *Core curriculum.* Many school systems with a junior high school level combine two or more subjects (perhaps English and history) during the seventh and sometimes eighth grades. Again, this gives the student a feeling of "belonging" to one teacher and of seeing the correlation between subjects that he knew in elementary school. Some school districts are rearranging class instructors to provide more emphasis for the "middle school" years.

► *Cumulative record.* As long as your teen-ager has been in the same school system (and many school systems pass their records along when a student moves away from the school), he has been building up a "cumulative record," a year-by-year description of his progress mentally, physically, and emotionally. This record contains notations from teachers, counselors, and principals, as well as pointers that perhaps came to light during parent-teacher conferences in elementary grades. Teachers and counselors in high school not only continue to add to the record, but they continuously refer to it in order to understand your teen-ager's performance and potential.

Guidance and Counseling

No area of high school services has expanded and grown in importance more than the guidance and counseling system. Especially selected and trained counselors try to provide continuity and direction for all students in the high school.

A counselor can help your teen-ager determine why he should study certain subjects, why he should enroll in college, why he should consider technical work instead of an academic career, what his opportunities are in each occupation, why it is important that he make good grades in certain courses if he plans to go to college. The counselor can help with the selection of colleges or job opportunities. And he will be called upon by college deans or employers to give recommendations for your teen-ager.

An important function of the counseling office, one that underlies all of the services above, is the testing services of the guidance and counseling office. Teen-agers and their parents often look upon the high schools as one long "test-ache." Not only do students have the normal "internal" (inside-the-class-

room) tests, those administered by individual teachers for course work, but also counselors often use tests to determine vocational and creative abilities of students. The counseling office also usually administers the "external" tests, those required by agencies outside the school for use in determining college entrance, scholarship awards, employment capabilities (i.e., the College Entrance Examination Board tests). To avoid an endless repetition of external tests or the time-consuming use of afternoons and Saturdays, counselors, students, and parents should plan together about the kind and type of tests which the student needs.

Talking It Over

During your teen-ager's elementary school days you perhaps became accustomed to regular parent-teacher conferences, at which time you and the teacher exchanged information and comments about your child's progress.

At the high school level, regular talks with the teachers are not always a part of the planned activities. With five or six teachers to see, most parents would not have the time to make the rounds of the school. And teachers, with perhaps 150 or more students, would not have the time to see all parents, either. However, when a special problem arises in a subject, the teacher welcomes an opportunity to discuss it with parents and to plan with them ways to help the student.

The most direct source for parent-teacher conferences at the high school level is the counseling office. Indeed, the task of the counselor is extremely difficult if he does not have an opportunity to discuss the academic and vocational plans for a student with the student's parents.

A talk with the counselor is in order. How do you make the most out of the talk?

- ►Have a definite time to meet with the counselor. Dropping by the counseling office without warning will waste precious time, yours and the counselor's. He needs time to gather together all of the information that he has about your teen-ager and to formulate suggestions to present to you.
- ►Recognize the limits of the counselor. He can advise a course of action for your teen-ager, but he will not force it upon

him. Also, state law or public school policy may prevent the counselor from revealing IQ scores or other test results. However, he can interpret these scores for you, and that is what is important.

►Be open-minded about the advice the counselor gives you. He is interested only in helping the individual student to realize his full capabilities. If he recommends that your son or daughter consider a small college or a technical school rather than a big Eastern campus, realize that his advice is based on objective data. His goal is to do what is best for the student he guides.

►Be helpful. Just as the guidance counselor is frank with you, so he wants and expects you to be frank with him. If there are interests you think the school and its services could stimulate in your teen-ager, tell the counselor. If you have doubts about a study plan that was initiated for your teen-ager when he entered high school, discuss them with the counselor. If you think you know of reasons for poor performance by your teen-ager which might be corrected by the school, let the counselor know.

Talking Things Over in Other Ways

When your child was in elementary school, perhaps you found in the parent-teacher association a place to share experiences about your growing offspring, a place to keep in touch with what and how your child was learning, and a place to meet and personally get to know the teacher.

As you will remember from these elementary school days, the PTA is what the important "P" (parents) want it to be. During the high school years, contact with other parents in the school environment is still important to those who want to help their teen-agers as students and as growing young persons. With the diversified backgrounds and interests represented by the parents of a high school student body, a high school PTA could be one of the most enjoyable and useful groups available to parents of teen-agers. Out of an enthusiastic PTA could come:

►Parent discussion groups about particular teen-age problems.

►A voluntary code of conduct, or dress, or rules for school

social events, worked out with representatives from the PTA and the student body.

- Studies in depth of the many and constant improvements in high school curriculum (maybe parents would be interested in learning about space science, too).
- Roundup of supplemental classroom help that parents could provide. (A marine biologist, a labor economist, or a specialist in Chinese history might be called upon to share his knowledge with interested groups of students.)

The Social Side

While the main purpose of the high school is to teach, most high school students find in its halls and classrooms and associations an equally important (to them) reason for being there—to make and keep friends, to learn to function as members of a group.

Intellectual development is so closely interwoven with the personal self-confidence a teen-ager wants that high schools provide as many opportunities as possible to develop this confidence. Extra-class activities (hobby groups, student government, athletic competitions, speech activities) are ways in which high schools encourage satisfying and democratic group living among teen-agers.

However, parents sometimes need to be reminded that much of the social side of adolescent life is outside of the responsibilities of the school. Teaching responsibility and restraint with others is primarily in the realm of the home and the parents. Providing desirable outlets for social living among teen-agers—club houses, supervised after-school activities, or chances to participate and help in community life—need to come from parents working together.

CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

Have you . . .

- Made the "jump" to high school with your teen-ager, understanding the many changes and challenges which he faces?
- Made full use of the guidance and counseling office, learned

what services it can provide, and encouraged your teen-ager to use it?

- Checked on the ratio of counselors to students to be sure that your high school is able to provide adequate counseling services (the recommended maximum ratio is one counselor for each 250 students)?
- Encouraged your teen-ager to plan for the future, to realize that from the beginning of high school he is building an academic and social record that will be weighed by colleges and employers?
- Participated in the PTA and let it know what your special interests are?
- Checked the extra-school facilities available to teen-agers in your community to be sure that they are adequate and that they fulfill the needs of teen-agers and are properly supervised?

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TEEN-AGER AT HOME

"NOW, LET'S BE SENSIBLE ABOUT THIS . . ."

Experts on teen-age problems frequently mention, and rightly so, the self-confidence needed by teen-agers. Too often, the self-confidence needed by parents through the adolescent stage of their children is overlooked.

The growing pains of adolescence can be as difficult for parents as for teen-agers. Parents can see the stumbling with physical growth, accept unsettling rebellion as a part of their children's growing up, and—because they love their children very much—feel just as deeply the mistakes and setbacks of adolescence. Sometimes, to make matters more uncomfortable, parents are led to wonder just where they fit into the picture.

Parents don't need a sedative to last through adolescence. What they do need is a good dose of self-confidence, knowledge that they are trying to do their best for their children and that they are just as needed as they ever were.

Teen-agers may look upon other adults or upon youngsters their own age as confidantes. They may ask others for advice, and they may seem to reject their families. Underneath it all, however, it is from the family that a teen-ager gains his most confidence. This is where he learns that he is not only loved as a child, but respected as a person.

Parents shouldn't belittle their influence upon teen-agers. A good illustration of the directions they can foster in their teen-agers can be seen in the contrast of two recent studies of high school students, conducted by separate researchers. In

one group of high schools, students yearned to be the athletic leaders or the "personality kids." Students who excelled academically were not particularly popular, and girls especially were reluctant to do their best work. Although parents insisted that they wanted their children to make good grades, students blamed parents for an overemphasis on the "sports hero" and the "be popular" code. However, in another study of a group of several high schools, the students felt pushed toward high academic achievement, with the big scholarships and acceptance by the Eastern prestige colleges as their primary goals in school. This pressure from parents was causing many of them, the students said, to miss creative learning.

These are extreme examples, but they illustrate that under the unadmitted surface, parental influence can be and is an important factor in a teen-ager's life.

How much better it would be to say that you, as an understanding parent, influenced your teen-ager to:

- ►Learn to live with his ups and downs, emotionally, physically, and academically.
- ►Find himself as a member of society, by encouraging him to be curious and concerned about people, things, and events, and by providing him with a home environment which he could genuinely share with friends.
- ►Find himself as an individual, developing his own set of values (upon the foundation you have been building for him since infancy); deciding what his future will be; gradually learning economic responsibility.

What kind of home can accomplish all of this? Most importantly, it is the home in which there is *communication* among family members. Family discussion periods need not always be brought together to focus on crises or big problems. At the dinner table, at times when the family relaxes together, or when friends or relatives are being entertained, there are many things that could spark healthy discussions—neighborhood happenings, community affairs, items from newspapers. Parents can broaden the topics, stimulate interest, and subtly introduce a few values about human nature. Teen-agers can learn to express themselves on subjects that don't come out of a textbook. Families that are accustomed to talking to each other

about nonfamily affairs (above the level of gossip) more than likely also will feel free to communicate to each other on personal matters—an important necessity for teen-agers.

Another good characteristic of home life for an adolescent is an atmosphere in which there is "give and take" by all members of the family. Sister learns to share the telephone at certain hours with brother—a sharing made much easier if both help arrive at the decisions concerning time, length of calls, etc. Teen-agers who contribute to decisions about family life at a "kitchen cabinet" or a weekly powwow will more willingly accept family rules. Another example: the junior teen-ager who learns what effect an increase in his allowance will have upon the family budget will also learn how to handle his own money more wisely.

Home life should also give teen-agers a chance to be themselves. They should not need to pretend that everything is fine, when there is actually a great pressure felt to make better grades, to be a better athlete, or to be invited to the most important parties. The youngster should know that he can fail in an endeavor and can make mistakes. He should know that he can "blow off steam" without purposely hurting others, and realize that he will still be accepted as a person.

A need that sometimes escapes the notice of parents is that the teen-ager must be able to find privacy when he needs it. A room of his own, a separate hobby area, a place where he can entertain without stumbling over other members of the family are the ideal situations. Even if he shares a room with another member of the family, there should be separate areas set aside for study and for hobbies. The "I want to be alone" attitude of teen-agers is not necessarily a forecast of maladjustment (unless it happens *too* often); rather, it is a healthy sign that the teen-ager can be creative by himself, can privately take stock of things, or needs to be quiet—alone.

It is in the family and home that a teen-ager learns self-control and restraint and receives guidance in areas where he gradually assumes responsibility.

To mention a few problem spots for parents:

► *Homework.* Most teen-agers, especially early in the high school years, need limits on time and place for doing homework. (Some can work better with the radio on than off;

practically none can accomplish anything with the TV on.) If limits are set and followed by all members of the family's younger set, you can avoid the parental nagging that so often has an opposite effect. To be sure of your ground, check with the school to see what the teachers say is a proper amount of time for homework. Keep in mind that your teen-ager probably works faster in one subject than in another, and that in the advanced grades, assignments will vary.

► *Dating.* There are certain essentials that your teen-ager should tell you about evening activities: where, with whom, time of beginning and end, the kind of activity that it is. Parents of both girls and boys need to know the kind of transportation and should be the ones to set the deadline time. Week-day dating and the number of dates depend upon your estimation of your teen-ager. Also, remember that rigid rules on dating can be quite helpful to the teen-ager when he begins to date, but can unnecessarily frustrate a senior in high school, who is more responsible and has different social interests from a seventh-grader.

► *Car.* Car ownership and good grades in school generally are not good mixers. Parents must weigh their teen-ager's maturity and self-control. If he owned his own car, for instance, would he be sacrificing his school work? Whether he owns a car or shares the family car, your teen-ager should be a qualified driver, properly prepared to handle a car, and he must have friends who share in his good judgment. One good source for wise words to the young driver, incidentally, would be a talk with your automobile insurance agent, the person who knows well the consequences of driving a car.

► *Money.* Money becomes an irritating problem to adolescents and to their parents. Doing small chores for payment is one of the childish things that adolescents would like to put behind them. Yet, at the same time, they have much more need for spending money than ever before, not only for social life and private wants, but also for regular expenses such as school fees, lunches, field trips, or school activities. An allowance is something a teen-ager needs, and rather than be arbitrary about it, why not sit down with your teen-ager and work out a list of his expenses, arriving at a sum fairly

agreeable to all? For special expenses, like hi-fi components or other hobby purchases, many parents agree to match funds, putting up part of the money if the teen-ager will earn the rest. If your teen-ager earns all or part of his regular expense money, doing other things than household or neighborhood chores, encourage him to save some of it. Help him open a savings account. Be sure that having surplus cash on hand doesn't become so important to him that he would rather work than finish school.

CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

Do you . . .

►Provide opportunities for your teen-ager to help make decisions of mutual interest—allowances, use of car, use of home—while providing the guidance he needs?

►Provide opportunities for your teen-ager to make decisions relevant to himself and to evaluate himself—grades, study skills, behavior toward others—and help him maintain his decisions in a positive way?

►Create a hospitable home environment (a parent's attitude is more important than the space or food in the icebox) so that your teen-ager wants to invite his friends to his home? Do you also realize that many teen-age group activities are not home-oriented?

►Encourage your family to watch quality television shows together, read current magazines and good books during their leisure time—and talk about them together?

►Show an interest in school problems, teen-age activities, and community affairs? Do you encourage your teen-ager to evaluate these activities with you, yet know how to gracefully retreat from running (or ruining) his interests?

►Make sure that *both* parents share equally the various problems of your teen-ager—with consistent approaches?

►Maintain privacy and "separateness" in the home for parents, as well as teen-agers, realizing that each is entitled to his own interests and activities?

CHAPTER FIVE

THE SPECIAL ONES

"WHAT DO I DO WITH HIM NOW?

All teen-agers have problems. That is what this book is all about—the expected ups and downs of adolescent life.

But many parents are faced with the unexpected problems, problems for which the answers are not clear or readily available.

You may wonder what to do if your teen-ager:

►*Is an Underachiever.* Most teen-agers, unless spurred on by an intense interest in a subject, don't do as well scholastically as they should or could. For one thing, there are too many other things to think about. But there is a group of teen-agers who score high on intelligence and aptitude tests, yet persistently fail. If you see this trait in your teen-ager, perhaps you should ask yourself, first, if you have held his high IQ over his head too often, been guilty of accusing him of "sloughing off," instead of encouraging him to find out with you why he isn't doing better. Ask him why he thinks he doesn't do better. This probably won't solve the problem, but it may give you some clues as to how to help. Check with the guidance counselor and teachers. Have the doctor give him a physical examination, especially of the eyes and ears. If the problem persists and your community has the resources, perhaps you might find the services of a child guidance clinic or a child psychiatrist helpful to find out if there are personality or emotional problems that may be causing the lack of achievement.

►*Is Especially Talented.* One of the worst kinds of human waste is to let a young person who is especially gifted or talented—creatively, academically, or both—go unchallenged.

This surplus of intellectual energy is sorely needed by society, and the teen-ager who has unusual capability needs to use it. Otherwise, he may always feel out of place or bored by his environment. If you think your teen-ager is superior, find out for certain whether this is true. Check with the school counselor and the teachers. Be sure that he is given proper measurement tests. Through the school, perhaps you can work out a schedule of elective courses which will be especially enriching. Frequently, teachers will volunteer to assist a group of superior students in after-school hours, perhaps with language study or extra laboratory assignments. Many high schools which are located near higher education facilities have arrangements whereby superior high school students can enroll in freshman college courses and earn credit. Placed together in an accelerated class, the students sometimes are given stiffer and more frequent assignments, more opportunities for independent study. At home, a good personal library, materials, and opportunities for trips and visits to stimulating places can enrich and nourish individual motives and talents.

►*If Your Teen-Ager Is a Girl.* This is a big category, which includes about half of all parents, but we mention it here because girls do present special problems, especially scholastic problems. Girls not only mature faster physically but also mentally, and at the high school level a good percentage of the girls can outdistance most of the boys on school work. The trouble is, however, that most of them don't want to. Wrong as it may seem, it is not often that the adolescent code allows "brains" and "popularity" to appear in the same girl. Girls often tend to hide their shining intellect under a "dumb blonde" attitude. With proper direction from teachers and proper persuasion from parents, girls can be encouraged to use their full intellectual capacities—and still be popular. It will be important for them to understand the importance of this combination, because most women of the future will combine the roles of wife, mother, and member of the labor market. A sound education will be necessary for all roles. Career opportunities for women are expanding all the time, with attractive salaries and status. Exceptionally tal-

ented girls can have an enriching life, including the traditional roles of wife and mother, if they prepare for it early.

►*If He Wants To Drop Out of School.* Discourage him. A teen-ager frequently decides that owning a car and having plenty of money for dates are more important than attending classes; so he drops out of school. This happens most often in urban areas where there is some marginal employment for teen-agers in the unskilled jobs (dishwasher, garage attendant, etc.). Sometimes, the reason is to help out with family finances, although usually the school and people in the community can work out after-school arrangements that are just as lucrative as day work. The primary reasons for dropping out of school, however, are that school work has become irrelevant to the needs of the student or that he has dropped so far behind in school work, he feels he can never catch up. Often, this whole problem is caused by a reading difficulty which may stem from a physical defect. Perhaps the courses which your teen-ager has outlined for himself are not what he actually wants to study or can handle. If you and the counselors work with him on a schedule which suits his needs and training for his future, he may forget about dropping out of school. If he wants to work now, encourage him to take vocational courses. Perhaps the school has a plan whereby students can work outside of school, with supervision, as part of their regular school course.

►*Wants To Get Married.* Teen-age marriage is a trend that began during World War II and has gradually increased. One of every four girls under 18 is married, and many high schools look upon their married students as special problems, sometimes enforcing restrictions upon them. Most educators and sociologists would advise parents to do their best to discourage teen-age marriages. The marriages frequently fail (the highest divorce rate is in the age group under 20). These marriages also penalize the married couple from an educational standpoint; continuing for a high school diploma is difficult, if not impossible, with the new burdens of maintaining a home.

Here are some preventive measures for parents:

1. Arrive at an early understanding in the family about dating habits, but don't push your adolescent into social life, making him feel that it is all a popularity contest.
2. Encourage your teen-ager to date in groups and to enjoy group social activities, to "play the field" rather than "pair off."
3. Provide a wholesome home life, one that a teen-ager wants to belong to and not run away from.
4. Quickly correct serious dissatisfactions with a school program, enlisting the help of counselors and teachers, so that your teen-ager will want to finish high school and have vocational experience after high school.

►*Is Handicapped.* Parents of physically or mentally handicapped children know, by the time their children have reached adolescence, that the handicap is what you make of it. The attitude toward it is what is important. Handicapped children who know that their parents are "with" them, and not withdrawn from them because of their condition, have almost all the resources needed to overcome what might be a severe setback in life. A ready source of assistance for the parent in this situation is the school program which includes special services and specially trained personnel. There may be separate classes (for the hard of hearing or mentally retarded, for example), or home services, such as a visiting teacher for the temporarily homebound student. Many of these programs extend into the high school level, for one of the rapidly growing areas is the high school training service for mentally retarded students. Such units usually combine education in fundamental subjects, with additional job training that will enable such students to participate in and contribute to community life.

Another handicap sometimes makes parents of teen-agers react with surprise and alarm: severe emotional disturbances or mental illness. The factors for emotional disturbances often build up gradually in children, and frequently the tensions of adolescence are enough to bring the confusion to the surface. Some forms of mental illness are extreme and can be detected easily, once they appear on the surface. Parents should seek immediate psychiatric help to assist their child and guide themselves.

Often a growing emotional disturbance may be observed only in school, or only in the home, but it takes the cooperation of both the school and home to root out the trouble and find ways to help. Parents can turn to the family doctor, medical specialists, family counseling services, school psychologists working with the teachers, church and youth groups, or community health organizations. Many communities are organizing child guidance centers, where psychiatrists, psychologists, teachers, and parents can work together to unravel the severe emotional problems in children. Some urban communities have established separate, small, and closely supervised classes for severely disturbed adolescents.

CHAPTER SIX

PLAYING BY THE RULES

"WHO IS THIS 'EVERYBODY'. . . ?"

Today's teen-agers were born during the unsettling years after World War II, brought up in a world of constant change and uncertainty, and have been guided by a pattern of family life that is new to our society, one in which family ties are often loosely knit. On top of all this, they face the eternal trials of adolescence, of reaching out for maturity while reaching back for confidence. Such growth requires a sturdy understanding between parents and children.

Most parents, searching for their proper place in the teen-ager's world, today reject the bygone role of over-protectiveness. Many parents have even moved to another extreme attitude. They are content to say, "Just leave it to the kids."

Left adrift, tne youngsters too often set their own rules and tell you defensively that "this is the way the Jones' boys do it. To avoid the pitfall of being cornered into following an "everybody's doing it" code, parents in many communities have sat down with students and teachers to work out the details of a voluntary code of conduct.

A typical product of this kind of cooperation, usually developed by a group of parents, teachers, and students (with students in the majority), often includes recommendations similar to the following:

- ►Allowances should be determined after a family conference. They should be planned together, based on a discussion of financial needs and management of money.
- ►Parents should know where, and with whom, their sons and daughters are spending their time while away from home.
- ►Family plans should be organized so that: (1) necessary transportation of young people can be provided, and (2) individual members can be reached in case of emergency or change of plans.
- ►Students should recognize that the family car is primarily for parental use but parents should be generous with it on special occasions.
- ►If parents are to call for their children at the end of a party, they should do so at the designated time, neither early nor late.
- ►Parents and young people together should plan in advance for entertainment in the home. Boredom and confusion lead to undesirable results.
- ►Establish definite hours in keeping with the age group. See to it that the party ends at the time stated in the invitation.
- ►Parents should be present during all home parties, but may be inconspicuous.
- ►Well-laid plans for a party are disregarded only by a rude guest. A courteous youth will follow the plans of the host.
- ►"Lights out" has no place in a well-ordered party.
- ►Drinking and smoking are not acceptable for the high school student.
- ►Dating many different persons in high school is better than going steady.
- ►Sincerity and open-mindedness are important in the discussion of friends and activities. There may be good reasons for modifying or reversing an opinion.
- ►Week-night curfews should come at 10 or 10:30 p.m.; weekend curfews may extend from midnight for the 14-year-olds to 1:30 a.m. for seniors.

Codes of behavior are well accepted by both students and parents when they have had the successful experience of arriving at mutual values and mutual understanding. Frequently, the codes are extended to apply to acceptable dress in the classroom. Students enthusiastically respond to standards of neatness and are willing to join together to frown upon indecent dress.

To guide parents "in the tremendous task of rearing their children," as one superintendent of schools put it, the community circulated a questionnaire among more than 700 parents to find the basic rules of conduct that parents required at home. Parents were not asked to sign the questionnaires, only to designate the grade level of their child. The results, circulated later among the parents, were a common denominator of what everybody *was doing*. Some of the findings:

- ►The average bedtime for the ninth grader was 10:15 p.m.; for the high school senior, about 25 minutes later.
- ►The eighth grader spent an average of two hours a day on homework; the high school senior required about an hour and three-quarters.
- ►The seventh grader watched evening TV programs more than any other teen-ager, almost two hours each school day evening; the high school senior watched TV less than an hour a day.
- ►Allowances almost doubled between the eighth and ninth grades; the average for a high school senior was $2.90 a week, with a top allowance of $5 a week.

THE GOLDEN RULES

No matter how definitive the rules become, no matter how small are the matters that the rules govern, the underlying concept that parents are trying to instill in their teen-agers is: *Grow up, with our help.*

Behind the restrictions, persuasion, and advice that go into discussions about dress, dating, study, and money, parents are asking their teen-agers for larger things, for goals that will create a healthy tomorrow for everyone in the family, includ-

ing the time when the adolescent will find in his experience the guidelines for being a parent himself.

Instead of fearing that their teen-agers are part of a "mixed-up generation," a tag consistently placed on each generation of teen-agers, parents today are realizing that their adolescents are truly maturing during a changing time. The qualities they hope to see developed in their teen-ager sons and daughters are:

- ►Patience—with growing up, with things that change too slowly or too quickly.
- ►Curiosity—about people, knowledge, new ideas, new values.
- ►Concern—about people and their problems, the worth of the individual.
- ►Humor—that can find enjoyment in small things as well as big, that can laugh at mistakes.
- ►Discernment—that learns to tell the good from the bad in ideas, actions, culture, standards.
- ►Hope—for maturity, for a fruitful and contributing future.

And isn't it only fair that your teen-ager expects his parents to have the same qualities?

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